

Good afternoon, committee members, and thank you for the opportunity to speak to you today. My name is Karonda Locust and I am a wife, mother, sister, and friend to many. I sit on the West Humboldt Park/Garfield Park Community Action Council. I am the LSC and PAC chairperson at Willa Cather Elementary School and former LSC chairperson at Uplift Community High School. I live in the Austin community and am a resident in Sen. Lightford's district. **I am here today representing the Kids First Chicago Elected School Board Task Force.**

I believe that fair racial representation on our future elected school board is important because it is essential that our board members understand the communities where students live. I'm sorry, but if you have rich White people representing poor Black or Latino communities, they are just not going to be able to know what those students face in their day-to-day lives and adequately address their educational needs through equitable policymaking.

If you haven't lived it, you can't quite understand it. If you have not been in our schools, you cannot know what our students need. You can't learn what you need to know just through data, you have to also have the experience. How are you going to know what it's like to not have internet access at home if you haven't lived through something like that? It is unfair for someone in a position of privilege to expect people to come out of poverty if you haven't lived through it or seen it firsthand.

That is exactly the type of elitist oversight that we are trying to do away with by moving to an elected school board. I, for one, do not feel that the appointed school board has represented us well, and I don't want to continue making the same mistake with an elected board. I'm even more worried that this new school board will become too political and dominated by CTU and other special interest groups. We need to ensure that we have leaders who represent the people.

Representation matters. It matters to be able to see yourself in leadership. It matters to our students. It is good for them to see someone who looks and sounds like them because they know that they have their best interest at heart. It is good for them to know that someone from their community is there to speak on their behalf.

Now let's think about the 47% of CPS students who are Latino and the 36% who are Black, and let's make sure that they have representation who understand them. You have the power to help make that happen by how you draw these districts. Your first draft was not good enough, so you need to do better for our students on your next draft. Let's put the "representative" in "elected representative school board."

I believe a school board that reflects CPS's diversity can better understand the needs of children in our communities and will deliver better results for our students.

Thank you for your time today.

Karonda Locust

[*Kids First Chicago Elected School Board Task Force submission](#)